The Unitarian Christian

ol. 6 MAY 1951 No. 8

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The Fatherhood of God.
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The Progress of Mankind,
Onward and Upward forever

WHAT IS RELIGION?

By religion the Unitarian means a recognized dependence of Man upon the power greater than himself which he feels at the heart of things, animating, guiding, reconciling all by the action of a will that is neither above law nor subject to it, but is itself Law. If he stopped here he would indeed incur the charge of being satisfied with a rather abstract philosophical scheme. He adds to his definition the element of personal service. Toward this power he feels those sentiments of devotion, of gratitude, of duty, of dependence, which lead to rational worship on the one hand and to right dealing with his fellow men on the other. Thus his philosophy and his morals grow rationally and essentially out of his religion. In it they find their explanation and their support. Lacking this purely religious element, philosophy would be to him a barren abstraction and morality a heartless code.

—Ephraim Emerton, author, "Unitarian Thought."

NOTICE

This is the last issue of the Unitarian issue until Fall. The magazine is published from October to May.

Back copies or new subscriptions may be procured through the Editorial Office, price 15c per copy; $1.00 per year's subscription.

LOYAL UNITARIAN SPEAKS"

ev. Heinz Rettig is editor of The itarian Christian, member of the w England Unitarian Council, mber of the New England Council Applied Religion, President of the itarian-Universalist Ministers' As- iation of Essex County. His urch is meeting its UNITARIAN PEAL goal annually.)

eface: Is not the Loyal Unitarian who, out of love for his denomi- ion, risks unpopularity by con- uctive criticism?

"Is this the annual meeting of a gious fellowship?" asked an in- igent and spiritually minded lay- n chosen by his church to serve delegate to the Annual Meeting the American Unitarian Associ- on.

He continued: "I have heard much l about politics and even econom- I have heard minority voices nced by the inundating votes of jorities influenced by the half ths of well organized propagan- s. I have seen resolutions passed the name of Unitarianism which not represent me or even my ividual moral right to hold devi- views. I have felt little of a re- ous enthusiasm capable of so itually strengthening delegates t they might return home to their pective struggling churches re- shed for the challenges ahead."

o reports of Unitarian member- increases reveal any trace of se who have left a meeting ch in the name of "Social Action" ually misrepresents the silent, un- resented members who make up marrow of our denomination? Do h reports tell anything of the itual plight of those who seek ething which news commenta- , college lecturers or politicians

REV. HEINZ RETTIG

do not offer, namely the personal application of an ethical and spiritual faith?

Without answers to these questions one can hardly evaluate the strength of our denomination or its true power for withstanding the tests of the future. Should we not think through the consequences of present trends?

What will happen if our annual meetings continue to degenerate into mass forums where minorities vie with each other over the passing of labelling resolutions which represent simply the private opinions of the sponsors? How can one rightly expect the outvoted minorities to feel? What is the reaction of the Unitarian layman whose political affiliations are diametrically opposed to the winning resolution so often successfully railroaded through during the last exhausting hours of the Annual Meeting, after many delegates have left, have abstained from voting or are too confused to make up their minds?

How will delegates, the membership at large and the curious outsiders react to such proposals as that which would delete the word "teachings" from the preamble to the by-laws which now reads: "The purpose of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure religion, which, in accordance with the TEACHINGS of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man." One need hardly reflect the symptoms of paranoia to discern the cunning of those who wish to change the phrase, "teachings of Jesus" to "as stated by Jesus." The former is a clear statement of fact, the latter injects the poison of relativity into a cause which has altogether too much of it for the good of its morale.

If this change should pass will not there be those who will say at a future Annual Meeting, " . . . why not leave out the words, 'stated by Jesus' . . . the ideals are implied." The result will be precisely what some may desire after cleverly hoodwinking others through methods worthy only of the Communist fellow traveler.

What will be the conclusion of the neophyte who, upon examining Unitarian doctrine and practice, discovers a glaring discrepancy between the slogans adorned by the word "democracy" and the inherent centralization of authority proposed by the Commission on By-Laws!

These are only questions of one man, the Editor of the Unitarian Christian, but may they not reflect the silent broodings of many loyal and devout Unitarians who have shrugged their shoulders in despair if not in disgust? And if so what shall one conclude as to the cumulative worth of liberal morale under such conditions?

THOUGHT FOR THIS DAY

By

REV. ROLAND GRAY-SMITH, Ph. D.

"According to the Christian conception, the meaning of human life consists in cooperation with the divine goodwill. This conception supplies our demand for meaning. It relates the days of our years together into a consistent whole It relates man to man coherently in human institutions.

"Cooperating with the divine goodwill, we shall try to leave the world better than we found it. It is in this social purpose that many people find meaning in their lives There have been times when it was easy to believe that the world was progressing. Today we wonder. Indeed, there is a new fear in the hearts of men. The survival of civilization is itself in question. We are tempted to doubt and despair. But in spite of the hard realities that threaten to deprive life of all meaning we are still called upon to believe in the light that shines beyond Calvary and gird ourselves afresh to persist in our effort to leave the world better than we found it.

"But pursuing social progress does not in itself complete life's meaning There is a sense in which we are not responsible for what happens to the world. We cannot force other people's wills. In the last analysis we are only responsible for the way we play our part. We can only do our best. What if, after all, there is an historical regress? And, progress or regress, there is still suffering and death to challenge the meaning of an individual's life. It is these things that 'faith working through love' must grapple with. We must find an ultimate meaning for our lives in something which is superior to temporal events. By faith the divine goodwill, with all its transcendent quality, is a present reality within our souls.

THE RE-VINDICATION OF HISTORY

(Last Installment)

By

V. ALEXANDER SZENT-IVANYI, D. D.
Minister of the First Congregational Society of Jamaica Plain, Mass.

Dr. Earl Wilbur Morse sums up ne meaning and lesson of Unitar- n history" in the last chapter of s book, "Our Unitarian Heritage." : says, "It was not merely a long tempt to substitute one set of doc- nes for another. That has often en involved in it, it is true; but neath all this has been something r deeper and more important."

He then goes on to say that free- m, reason and conscience, and tol- ance were those "deeper and more portant" contents of Unitarian story. Knowing that Dr. Wilbur uld be the first to welcome a endly and objective exchange of inion, I must humbly take the lib- y of expressing disagreement as the emphasis placed upon free- m, reason and conscience and ason in contradistinction to a set doctrines.

To be sure these liberal virtues e dear to Unitarians, past and esent, but not as important as the bstitution of one set of doctrines r another. If freedom and toler- ce are our basic teachings it must ike us strangely that none of the nerally known and quoted books these subjects are or were writ- n by Unitarians. Ruffini, Jordan, on or Cobb's books, concerned th these issues, would be recom- ended by most University profes- rs, encyclopaedists or literary crit- but none of these men was itarian.

DR. ALEXANDER SZENT IVANYI

If freedom and tolerance are our basic teachings we might well be expected to serve as "specialists" who have produced at least some great books on these subjects. Unitarians did achieve literary distinction in the field of theology, namely by such writings as "The Restitutio Christianium" in the sixteenth century, "The Seat of Authority" in the nineteenth century and "The Church Of The Spirit" in the twentieth century among others. But none of these dealt with freedom, reason or tolerance. Apart from outstanding sermons and addresses these objectives did not seem to be the core message of great Unitarians.

The great martyrs, confronting death, like Servetus and David did not speak of freedom, reason or tolerance in their last sentences. Servetus aired a theological subtlety in referring to the "Son of the eternal Father" rather than "the eternal son of the Father." David prophesied the collapse of the false teachings and the victory of what he called the "true teaching" that neither his death nor the sword of the popes could hold back forever.

Each was offered a pardon or alleviation of his sentence, if he only recanted but neither did. Surely they well knew what it was for which they were willing to suffer martyrdom! In their last hour they wanted neither to be free in the common sense of the term or tolerant of that against which they stood. Similarly the words of Channing, Martineau and Parker during the twilight of life gave little indication that freedom, reason and tolerance were foremost in their cause.

The literary architecture of Dr. Wilbur's book bears witness of the contradiction. What was his plan? Was it an attempt to describe the development of the ideas of freedom, reason and tolerance? Did he select the movements and personalities according to their relation to these principles? On the contrary. Had he traced such a history he would have written an undenominational account of these ideas rather than a clear cut handbook of denominational history.

Science too demands freedom, reason and tolerance as means without which Science could not be pursued as a discipline. But the contents of Science are quite different. This holds true for any religion, particularly Unitarianism. Prerequisites and contents are not interchangeable terms.

I would rather say that Unitarianism came about precisely for the purpose of substituting one set of doctrines for another providing one is not misled by a dogmatic definition of the word "doctrine." All I am saying is that great Unitarians did offer their own teachings to the world. This was their strength, that they did want to find the "Truth" and did want to give some systematic statement of their findings. What was their strength is our present weakness.

To be sure, there were differences of opinion even between such eminents as the historical martyr, Michael Servetus and the crusader Theodore Parker but had there not been clear cut points of agreement between these men Dr. Wilbur could not have used them in a book on Unitarian history. Probably the most characteristic point of agreement was that concerning the God-head. Historically it meant a correction of the neo-Platonic definitions of the Trinity but always had a wider and more cosmopolitan religious application. Whatever the form of its meaning however, the interpretation of God to man is central to Unitarianism during the course of at least 400 years of its history. In this search for the meaning of God Science helps to enlarge the understanding of Man. The moment God is left out of the picture or when Science is substituted for Religion, a Unitarian interpretation is meaningless.

God as the central idea in religion is more characteristically Unitarian than that of any other Christian denomination. The Unitarians consciously tore down the whole elaborate edifice of medieval theology in order that they might devote all their attention and devotion to God. In diagnosing the seemingly vandalistic and iconoclastic behavior of many Unitarians, Rudolph Eucken concluded that Unitarians are essentially mystics. This direct approach, the essence of mysticism, was always a foremost Unitarian objective.

The doctrine of Man's freedom, moral potentiality and all were viewed in relation to God only. They were entitled to work out their own salvation precisely because they were children of God, because God was within Man having created Man as such. Scientific Social Scientists may criticize Unitarians for their seemingly unwarranted optimism

oncerning man's nature but the nitarian view of God will not suf- er thereby. With God included in ne over all scheme the Unitarian octrine about Man's nature leaves ne scope of Science. The conse- uences of this doctrine however will e wholeheartedly endorsed by both sychology and the Social Sciences. To behave at least "as if" we had oral freedom is the very basis ithout which no cure can be per- rmed by the psychiatrist or no so- ety can be organized by the social ientist.

God interpreted in the light of er widening horizons of human vilization is the central idea of his- rical Unitarianism. It must how- er be an experential relationship d not only an experimental one. easoning about God is more typi- lly Scholastic than Unitarian be- use we cannot stop there but must, every age, fight for something ore, something deeper and more mane than Reason alone. This is hy Theology was never a favorite bject among Unitarians. The sys- matic statements of Unitarians ere always more matter of fact d down to earth than the hair litting definitions and arguments the theologians.

What can one conclude from these servations? Simply that God is the nter and sine-qua-non of Unitari- ism. This is not to say that those umanists who do not believe in od should ever be excluded from ywhere but it does mean that the pe of Humanist who rejects the lief in God cannot conscientiously l himself a Unitarian. History is e undeniable witness.

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF CONGREGATIONAL POLITY

By
DR. RICHARD D. PIERCE
Professor of History, Emerson College

The Unitarian denomination is one of a considerable number of Protestant denominations which are organized on basis of what is technically termed **congregational polity.** These denominations are made up of autonomous self-governed churches which have formed themselves into free fellowships for mutual helpfulness and spiritual encouragement. Each church, however, remains independent and self-determinative. Apart from its consent, no creed, no financial levy, no denominational policy can be made binding upon a local church.

This type of organization is common to several of the major Protestant denominations — Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Congregational-Christians as well as Unitarians. In fact, roughly one-third of the Episcopal church membership in this country belongs to churches of congregational polity.

Two other types of church organization are recognized in church polity and in the civil courts, namely, **presbyterial** and **prelatical.** In the former, churches are organized in a federal structure and the acts of representative assemblies become binding upon the local churches; in the latter, all matters of doctrine and practice are in the hands of the hierarchy and the individual churches are merely the extension of the will of those in authority.

Our Unitarian churches are the beneficiaries of the congregational type of church organization. Individual churches and individual church members are usually more progressive and open to change than are vested hierarchies or elected delegates to assemblies. Independent congregations are free to accept

new light and larger truths when there are no synods or councils to restrain them.

This fact is no better seen than in the history of our Unitarian churches in Massachusetts. Of the 152 churches at the present time within the Commonwealth, 104 antedate the formation of the American Unitarian Association in 1825; Ninety-one were formed before 1800 and 34 before 1700. That is, 68.4% of our Massachusetts churches were gathered before our denomination came into existence. Most of these churches (certainly 90%) were originally provided with Calvinistic confessions of faith which would give pause to the most ardent fundamentalist of the Twentieth Century. Yet not one of them but what has because of this freedom emancipated itself from a "creed outworn" and brought itself into the stream of liberal thought. Channing and Parker, as well as a host of others equally consecrated and spiritually earnest, have found haven within our free church fellowship and in turn have given our churches new theological direction and religious orientation.

But freedom has its hazards as well as its advantages. Freedom may and often has outreached its bounds and passed into license. The removal of sectarian restraints may be interpreted by some as an invitation to throw off all restraints, good and bad. Unitarian freedom has sometimes, it may be feared, overreached itself and chaos has for a time supplanted independence.

Our congregational polity begins first with the idea that each church and, for that matter, each member of each church is an independent free agent not properly hampered by any outside controls. It then moves from this first premise to the corollary of that independence, namely, the right and obligation to seek fellowship with like-minded churches and peoples for mutual understanding and common inspiration.

No one who is loyal to the tradition of Unitarian freedom will want to regiment any church or church member into organizational conformity. Each church has a right to determine its own course and deal with its internal affairs as it wills. But churches and individuals are free to join with those who think and believe like themselves. Therefore our individual freedom carries with it the right to work with those whose vision is our vision and whose aims are our aims. Those who are theists have a right, indeed, perhaps an obligation to join hands in a free fellowship of those who are fellow theists. The Unitarian Christian Fellowship would seem to be such a fellowship. It does not seek to prevent others of different point of view from affiliating with one another in similar or parallel organizations. In fact, such organizations already exist and properly so.

The relationship of the Unitarian Christian Fellowship to the denomination should be that of a well organized fellowship of those who are committed to the theistic position. As individuals and as an organization, its tenets should be expressed through all proper channels of denominational work and affairs. There is no place for a militant pressure group within our denomination but there is very definitely a place for Unitarian Christians to find fellowship and mutual expression.

The Unitarian Christian Fellowship is a theistic group, within our larger and more inclusive American Unitarian Association. Congregationalism is not alone independence; it is also mutual interdependence of free folk one upon the other. The Unitarian Christian Fellowship is an opportunity for the expression and realization of such interdependence and mutual fellowship.

UNITARIAN MISSION PREACHER INSPIRING

r. Preston Bradley, Minister of eople's Church, Chicago, Ill., stirs nitarians of Boston and vicinity to enewed consecration of the exten- on of Unitarian Christianity.

"Conversion to religious faith is th theologically and psychologi- lly sound," said the Rev. Preston adley, D. D., before a packed audi- rium on the opening night of a ree day Mission of Unitarian ristianity at the Arlington Street urch on Monday night, April 23 8 o'clock.

The theme, "Christianity For ese Times" highlighted the entire sy week of preaching not only at e Arlington Street Church eve- gs but at the King's Chapel noon- y services, at the Boston Univer- y Chapel in the morning and ain at a reception dinner for Dr. adley at the Second Church in ston.

Three dynamically presented top- , "What Is Unitarian Christian- ?," "Youth, This Is Your Hour," d "The Christian Answer To orld Catastrophe," drew an unusu- y fine attendance, which to Uni- rianism was probably the statisti- equivalent of the evangelical mul- udes who flocked to hear Billy aham or Byron Green. There was wall of standers-by but the en- siastic filling of the Arlington reet Church on week nights was morale building experience for all.

DR. PRESTON BRADLEY

At the opening gun meeting of the Arlington Street Church Dr. Bradley dramatically won his point, namely that "the figure of Christ remains to this day the most potent example for stirring men to the zeal of prophecy and martyrdom, if need be, for the convictions which Unitarian-Christians have long held in sacred trust.

"I preach the gospel of the Man of Nazareth, not the Christ of the creeds or of the theological casuits, but the Christ whose compassion for people still remains the gleam which Unitarians must follow," said Dr. Preston Bradley. At the final dinner held in his honor he elaborated upon this theme with vivid and telling personal experiences, the sum total of which, left all who heard him inspired by a renewed devotion to the Unitarian Christian mission in the world of today.

The committees which successfully conducted their work with dignity and consecration to the true spirit of a Unitarian preaching mission are as follows:

(Continued)

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

Honorary Chairman: Rev. Frederic May Eliot, D. D., President, American Unitarian Association. Honorary Vice Chairman: Rev. Charles E. Park, D. D., Rev. Henry Hallam Saunderson, D. D. General Chairman: Robert H. Loomis. Treasurer: Constant Wendell.

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A PRAYER

Almighty Father, thou who art the unseen Ruler of the world; we rejoice in thy works and we adore thee for thy goodness. Through the succession of the days, and the coming and going of the seasons we feel thy constant presence. We do not say, Surely the darkness shall hide us from thee. We know that with thee the night shineth as the day; and darkness and light are alike to thy vision. Help us to rejoice in the knowledge that we are constantly in thy presence.

We thank thee for the glory of the world all about us; for the light of the sun by day and the stars by night. The glory of the world is thy glory; for thou art the beauty of all things beautiful; thou art the majesty of all things majestic. The worlds move silently in their orbits, and the stars are voiceless in their unending journeys. But thou hast given to man a voice; and we would sing aloud thy praises; we would utter our adoration; we would lift our voices in prayer.

Thy gifts are many and precious: a world in which to live; a world in which to labor that it may more fully express thy will; a human family in which we have, each one, his place; this life in which we may learn God's Fatherhood and Human Brotherhood. Help us to pray in faith that thy kingdom may come upon this earth; and thy will be done among men as it is in the heavens. We rejoice that our Master, even Jesus the Christ, has lived among men and that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We make our prayer as his disciples. Amen.

THE UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN is published monthly from October to May, by the Unitarian Christian Fellowship, (Mrs. William Stanley Parker, President; Rev. Paul Harmon Chapman, Corresponding Secretary.)

Editorial Board: Rev. Heinz Rettig, Chairman, Rev. Carl Bihldorff, Rev. Clayton B. Hale, Rev. Henry Hallam Saunderson, D. D., Rev. Alexander Szent-Ivanyi, D. D., Mrs. Herbert Lyman and Constant Wendell.

Managing Editor, Rev. Heinz Rettig.
Editorial Secretary, Miss Margaret Rice.
Second class matter, entered Sept. 6, 1950, at the Postoffice, Newburyport, Mass., Under Act of July 3, 1879.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: for magazine only, $1.00 a year payable to Treasurer, Constant Wendell, Unitarian Christian Publication Office, 26 Pleasant Street, Newburyport, Mass.

Copies of the UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN in quantity are available for distribution in local parishes for literature tables. Apply to Editorial Office, 26 Pleasant Street, Newburyport, Mass.

Articles for publication in this periodical are welcome for consideration from all who wish to use these columns to express Unitarian Christianity.

APPLICATION

Unitarian Christian Fellowship

102 MT. VERNON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

Purpose: To preserve and strengthen the Christian essence of Unitarianism.

I hereby subscribe to the purpose of the Unitarian Christian Fellowship as outlined above. Herewith is $.....in payment of membership for the current year, May 1st, 1951, through May 1st, 1952; this to include a yearly one dollar subscription, to the publication of the Fellowship.*

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*Regular membership $2.00.
Contributing membership $5.00 or more.

May, 1951, the Red Cross will be celebrating its 70th anniversary in America. Did you know that like many other internationally minded organizations, it had a hard birth in this country? Like the man who couldn't repair his roof when it was raining, and didn't feel the need to when it wasn't, the United States turned its back on the Red Cross in both war and peace for years before its final acceptance. This month you can read the story of its birth in America and the large part Unitarians had in its initiation . . . A director of youth groups on the West Coast describes his experience with young people, some of their difficult problems in these times of special sacrifice for them, and what we can do about helping them over their period of insecurity and dis- cation . . . Two alumni, one of whom is on the Board of Directors, clarify the new curriculum of the Meadville Theological School at Chica and discuss the purpose of this, one of the finest schools of liber religion in the country . . . Stanley Lichtenstein reports on his verb duel with the Jesuit magazine, **America**, adding more fuel to the fi of Church-State debate . . . In this issue you will also find the complete text of the Resolutions for the Annual Meetings and the Proposed Re- visions of the By-Laws. Don't be without them when you come to M Meetings!